

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Employee Engagement is a fundamental concept in the effort to understand and describe, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the nature of the relationship between an organization and its employees. If every part of human resources is not addressed in appropriate manner, employees fail to fully engage themselves in their job in the response to such kind of mismanagement. The construct employee engagement is built on the foundation of earlier concepts like job satisfaction, employee commitment and Organizational citizenship behaviour. Though it is related to and encompasses these concepts, employee engagement is broader in scope. Employee engagement is stronger predictor of positive organizational performance clearly showing the two-way relationship between employer and employee compared to the three earlier constructs: job satisfaction, employee commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour. Engaged employees are emotionally attached to their organization and highly involved in their job with a great enthusiasm for the success of their employer, going extra mile beyond the employment contractual agreement.

Key Words: Employee engagement, Employee commitment, Organizational citizenship behaviour, Job satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Employee Engagement takes place when people at work are interested in and positive, even excited about their jobs and prepared to go the extra mile to get them done to the best of their ability. An engaged employee as defined Bevan et al (1997) is someone 'who is aware of business context, and works closely with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization'. Employee Engagement is a workplace approach resulting in the right conditions for all members of an organization to give their best each day. Employee Engagement is based on trust, integrity, a two-way commitment and communication between an organization and its members. It is an approach that increases the chances of business success, contributing to organizational and individual performance, productivity and well-being. From an employer's point of view, employee engagement is concerned with using new measures and initiatives to increase the positive emotional attachment felt and therefore productivity and overall business success. An engaged workforce produces better business results, does not hop jobs and more importantly, is an ambassador of the organization at all points of time.

Engaged employees are perceived to form a part of an organization's brand and an engaged, happy workforce can have a knock-on effect on customer retention, recruitment of key talent and the ability to attract new customers in a world where a company's values are crucial to the consumers.

ORIGIN OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

History records that about 2300 years ago, Alexander (356 BC – 323 BC) was able to march ahead and conquer unknown lands by battling for years across continents, miles away from home, because he had an engaged army that was willing to abide by its commander.

Alexander is known to have achieved the engaged workforce by ensuring that he spent face time with his men, listening and addressing grievance, ensuring on time payment of salary, dressing like the rest of his army and most importantly by leading from front.

More recently, in World War II, Americans funded a lot of money for researching the behaviour of its soldiers to be able to predict their battle readiness.

History is dotted with examples of leaders who have led their men by building a psychological commitment between their men and their ideology to achieve greatness. In this psychological contract lies the roots of today's Employee Engagement theories propounded by organizations.

Employee engagement involves the following aspects



- The nature of the job itself.
- Whether the employee feels mentally stimulated.
- The trust and communication between the employees and the management.
- The ability of an employee to see how their own work contributes to the overall company performance.
- The opportunity of growth within the organization.
- The level of pride an employee has about working or being associated with the company.

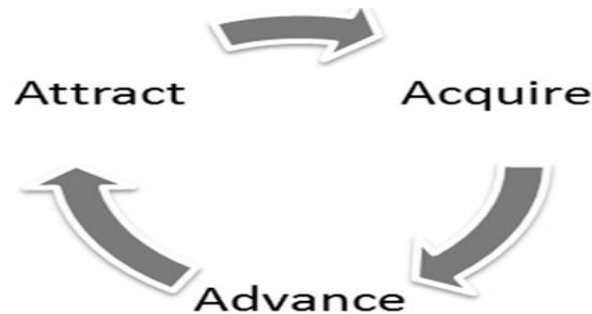
The emotional connection of an employee toward the organization tends to influence his or her behaviors and the level of effort in work related activities. The more engagement an employee has with his or her company, the more effort they put forth.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT - PHASES

Employee Engagement is a long-term process and goes through various phases describing the level of the engagement, involvement, attachment and belongingness between employee and employer. These phases of employee engagement make a continuous cycle that each organization which is aiming to achieve increased profitability must undertake.

Those employees who do not understand what they contribute towards the success of their organization will not stick to it for long. They would rather consider leaving in a few months or years as and when they are offered a high-paying job.

The following image shows the main phases of an employee engagement cycle where preparation is done much before an employee joins the organization.



The Attract Phase

The first phase of the employee engagement cycle is attracting the best talent from the industry. This phase involves creating a positive impression about the work culture and employee career as a potential employer.

The Acquire Phase

The acquire phase involves more than one aspect. It includes –

- The way these potential candidates are interacted while advertising a position.
- Keeping the promises that were made while hiring them.
- Providing the new joiners, a right kind of work culture.

The Advance Phase

Continuous moving of the talent is the last but an unending phase. It not only involves promoting the employees to a higher designation along with salary increments, but also growing them in other tangible and intangible ways.

As mentioned earlier, employee engagement is not only about attracting, acquiring, and retaining the best talent but also advancing their experience and personality.

Elements of Employee Engagement

The term Employee Engagement has been defined by various researchers. A commonly agreed upon definition of employee engagement would be physical, psychological or emotional involvement of the employee while at work.

Four things are important when we talk about Employee Engagement, which are –

- Commitment
- Motivation
- Loyalty
- Trust

All these elements play a vital role in determining the fate of an organization. Besides this, twoway communication to discuss challenges, potential consequences, vision and values and organization's future should be established. In fact, communication is the backbone of any organization without which it cannot survive for long.



Apart from this, organizational culture, a well-established and duly followed reward system including compensation, benefits, stock exchange options and recognition and personal growth and satisfaction of employees are also important factors in improving the levels of employee engagement.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT – STRATEGIES

Various studies have shown that actively engaged employees are almost 50 percent more productive when compared with the not-engaged or disengaged colleagues. Employee engagement cannot be improved only by designing and implementing effective human resource strategies but their involvement and quality of output produced by them also depends on their relationships with their colleagues, subordinates, and seniors.

A perfect balance of respect, care and competitiveness should prevail in the organization to keep the employees actively engaged in their jobs. Mutual support and healthy relationships contribute majorly to the organization's success. In addition, empowering employees by delegating them responsibilities and giving them autonomy to take decisions regarding their job on their own can also increase their productivity. Shyam is a very competent project manager at a software development company. He was recruited a few months ago, and he is already thinking of looking elsewhere. "I get no feedback whatsoever from my manager," he said. With no sense of how he fits into the company's overall goals or how he is performing, his motivation is down. "The hours are much better at this company," he concedes, "But I am not as engaged in the Work, I just don't care as much." This story is not unique, as many managers know. So here are some tips and strategies for retaining valuable employees.

Clearly define your vision

Make sure that your vision is provided as a roadmap for your employees and that they know each twist and turn.

Give employees what they want

Don't just assume that each one of your employees has all the tools, training and support from their supervisors which they need. It is better to check with them personally and find out.

Communicate well and often

Training sessions, memos, newsletters, FAQs and regular meetings can all be used to present your vision to your employees. Make sure to ask questions and if they are confused, redesign the way the information reaches them.

Get everyone engaged

Figure out a way to get all your employees engaged in planning and decision-making. That way the project becomes their baby, which will be something they will be willing to fight for.

Coach for success and practice random acts of kindness

Feedback is another great motivator. Don't wait for the periodic reviews; instead, offer feedback as often as possible.

Act fairly, respect, and create trust

Use your judgment, wisdom, and experience to create a supportive environment. When problems arise, examine the circumstances, understand the context and only then pass a judgment. Respect and trust your team and you will get the same in return. If you make a mistake, apologize and admit you were wrong. This will allow your employees to relate to you better and they will appreciate your honesty.

Try to make work fun

Good bosses pay attention to the bigger picture and the details. They care about both the product and their employees. A good way to show the care is to be involved in the creation process and to pay attention to what is going on. Do all these with a smile on your face. Lighten up! Making work fun really pays off, since people often get a lot more done when they enjoy themselves.

Give special attention to high-potential employees

Even in a tough economy, high-potential employees have other opportunities. During an economic crisis, employees who are anxious about their future can negatively affect a company. The reason is simple and obvious – they are less engaged in their jobs and they may be making plans to leave. So, managers need to pay special attention to their high-potential employees.

Implement incentive programs

No matter what kind of business you are in, you should certainly consider the incentive programs. They have been shown to be highly beneficial in motivating employees and a major benefit is that the cost can be based on the actual performance and paid out only after an employee has reached the desired goal. "Do good and you'll get rewarded" makes a positive impact on the company with employees working harder to meet the target.

When it comes to job satisfaction, financial rewards may be lower on the list than most people think. Being happy with your job seems to depend more on the intangibles, like feeling part of a team and being valued and appreciated consistently outrank money when employees are polled about job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Most studies demonstrate that feeling valued by management, two-way communication between management and employees, management's interest in employees' well-being and giving more opportunities for employees to grow are the top drivers of employee engagement. Nevertheless, as studies indicate, employees do not give much importance to pay and benefits. This might be the case because almost all the surveys were made in companies working in economically-well-to-do countries. The priorities of drivers might have varied if similar surveys were undergone in other third world countries, like African countries. Therefore, there is a need for more global surveys including more number of countries. Findings of various researches suggest their own strategies in order to keep employees engaged. Here in this article ten points or

strategies called ‘the ten tablets’ were suggested to keep employees engaged. For managers, work of employee engagement starts at day one through effective recruitment and orientation program, the work of employee engagement begins from the top as it is unthinkable to have engaged people in the organizations where there are no engaged leadership. Managers should enhance two-way communication, ensure that employees have all the resources they need to do their job, give appropriate training to increase their knowledge and skill, establish reward mechanisms in which good job is rewarded through various financial and non-financial incentives, build a distinctive corporate culture that encourages hard work and keeps success stories alive, develop a strong performance management system which holds managers and employees

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Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education 95 accountable for the behaviour they bring to the workplace, place focus on top-performing employees to reduce their turnover and maintain or increase business performance.

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